

Disneyland Will Permanently Close This Beloved But Controversial Ride in May

Opinions expressed by Entrepreneur contributors are their own.

Disney Parks has revealed that it will close Splash Mountain at Disneyland in California on May 31. The attraction was shut down at Disney World in Orlando in January.

The log flume ride will be replaced next year by Tiana's Bayou Adventure centered around the main character in "The Princess and the Frog."

Original Story Below:

A little over two years after activists called for Disney to remove Splash Mountain from Walt Disney World due to the ride's roots in a 1946 film with racist stereotypes, the company announced Friday it would replace the ride with one focused on the company's first black princess, Tiana.

Disney said it will remove the ride from Disneyland California at a date to be announced later.

Splash Mountain, which opened at the park in 1989, will close in 2023 and be replaced with a new ride called "Tiana's Bayou Adventure." The ride will feature new and old characters from *The Princess and the Frog*, a 2009 movie that follows Tiana's magical adventures around New Orleans.

The new ride will open sometime in 2024 in both parks, the company added.

Tiana's ride is "emblematic of what we're always striving for with our attractions – bringing people of different backgrounds together through timeless Disney stories," Carmen Smith, senior vice president of creative development wrote in a blog post.

In the wake of George Floyd's death in May 2020, activists started a Change.org petition asking Disney to redo Splash Mountain and focus a new attraction on Tiana.

Splash Mountain is the source of the classic Disney "ride" photo. It has been a popular ride for decades, for its sometimes-soaking-wet ride and high drops.

*In honor of Splash Mountain closing forever ...
pic.twitter.com/maG7EB66du*

– Courtney Marabella (@CourtMarabella) December 2, 2022

The ride features characters from a 1946 Disney film *Song of the South*, which has been criticized for racist stereotypes and framing, including when a black man, in a romanticized, post-Civil War south at one point, reminisces that things were better "a long time ago," per The Guardian.

Following the petition, the company announced in June 2020 that year it would replace Splash Mountain with a ride focused on Tiana, from *The Princess and the Frog*, which debuted in 2009.

"The new concept is inclusive – one that all of our guests can connect with and be inspired by, and it speaks to the diversity of the millions of people who visit our parks each year," the company wrote in a blog post at the time.

The announcement comes as the company faces a barrage of criticism about increased ticket and park prices, changes at CEO, and a stock loss of some 40% this year.

Related: Disney Fans Slam CEO Bob Chapek After More Park Price Hikes

In Tiana's movie, she is a hardworking waitress in New Orleans who wants to open her own restaurant, ends up catering a ball – and then kisses a prince in frog form, which then turns her into a frog.

The company said the ride picks up at the end of the film and lets riders join Tiana on a journey to “prepare to host a one-of-a-kind celebration for the people of New Orleans.”

Like the movie, the ride will be centered around New Orleans, Louisiana culture, and Mardi Gras, a yearly carnival-like celebration right before Lent that features colorful masks, parades, and balls.

The ride also will involve Zydeco music, which was created by people from Afro-Caribbean backgrounds and mixed with French Louisiana culture.

“We wanted that spirit reflected in this scene (and throughout the attraction) so that all our guests feel welcome to join in the celebration. It's emblematic of what we're always striving for with our attractions – bringing people of different backgrounds together through timeless Disney stories,” the company wrote.

<https://www.entrepreneur.com/business-news/disney-world-will-permanently-close-splash-mountain-in-2023/440338>